

Education without government

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Now the government must pay about \$1 million for the maintenance of DTUC's empty buildings, severance pay to instructors and relocation grants to students. The closure means 500 students are without a place near their hometown to finish their education, 100 staff and instructors are without a job and the city of Nelson is out \$3 million a year.

Critics may say the instructors and students are fulfilling the government's plans to privatize education because they are taking the operation into their own hands.

The school's organizers see it differently.

"I think we're energizing education rather than privatizing educa-

tion, Derksen says. "We're taking education out of the hands of the government, which sees education in terms of productivity and students in terms of commodities."

"Most of these politicians who are making education policy have never had any post-secondary education," Derksen adds.

Gary Whitehead, a DTUC graduate and Kootenay School instructor, says the school is not merely a continuation of DTUC's writing program, but is offering a type of alternative education for which the government is cutting back funding.

Whitehead says the school's emphasis is on practical skills and allowing budding writers to learn from established ones, such as Canadian poets Tom Wayman and Daphne Marlatt. He says the school will also

serve the artistic community in Vancouver and Nelson.

Derksen, echoing Whitehead's sentiments, says the school will be a "venue for things to happen spontaneously."

"I guess this is one of the important things we brought from Nelson where we were encouraged to be creative," he said. "In Nelson we were encouraged to follow through on ideas instead of thinking that things can't be done."

And as poet and Kootenay school instructor Wayman says, cutbacks in government funding do not have to mean the death of arts programs.

"Hopefully the Kootenay School of Writing will be a model to show people in other programs (being cut back) there is an alternative to simply disappearing," he says.

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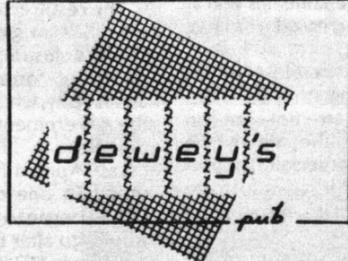


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